

they paused before a grave with a new headstone. On it she read her husband's name—and hers.

She gasped; and then she was aware that the vision lasted, and that the Angel of Death still stood at the bed's head. Beneath the sweep of the wide wings she could see her husband, seated, still holding Charley's hand, and the child, lying just as he had lain.

Then came a final scene. She saw her boy lying, white-haired, in a bed in a pauper ward of a hospital. She seemed now to read his heart. She saw the tardy penitence for the folly, the grief, the sorrow that the earthly pilgrimage had brought him. And over the vision thundered the voice of the Death Angel.

"Choose!" it seemed to say. "You have prayed as few women have prayed, and because the kingdom of heaven is taken by violence, it has been revealed to you to know the inscrutable meaning of God's actions. Choose now, between life and death!"

Miriam Steele raised her head and answered.

"You say the kingdom is taken by violence," she answered. "Well, I will take it. I do not believe these pictures. I know that man is gifted with free will, and that no inexorable fate can lie in wait to trap my boy. I know that if his heart is right, and if he is treated rightly, he will grow up to be a good man. What you have shown me is a warning, not a prophecy; it is a lesson, not an inexorable doom. I choose, and I choose life; and I will save our boy against all the terrors of life and all the promptings of the Evil One."

In the dread silence that followed the face of the angel seemed to assume a majestic benignancy. He turned and she saw a slow, pitying smile cross his face.

"It is possible. But it is hard," he seemed to say.

"What is a mother worth if she cannot guard her own?" answered Miriam Steele. "Begone! I choose

life for our child, and I will make that life what it should be."

She saw the angel lower his sword. A moment, and the grim shadow vanished from the room. Then, out of blank unconsciousness, Miriam Steele awoke, to find the doctor bending over her.

"She has come through the crisis," he said gravely.

Miriam Steele raised herself painfully from her bent knees. Her husband sat by the bedside still holding the hand of the boy, whose eyes were open and for the first time in days, filled with consciousness. And outside the glow of dawn was filtering into the room.

She felt her husband's arms about her. Her tears of joy mingled with his, and she knew that a mother's love is stronger than death, and strong enough for life.

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PROMPT!

Commander of U-Boat—Here! I say!

American Captain of Torpedoed Ship (In the water)—What?

Commander of U-Boat—Here is our letter of apology * * *

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SOFT SNAPS

